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Volume XI

Numbers Three and Four



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Numbers Three and Four

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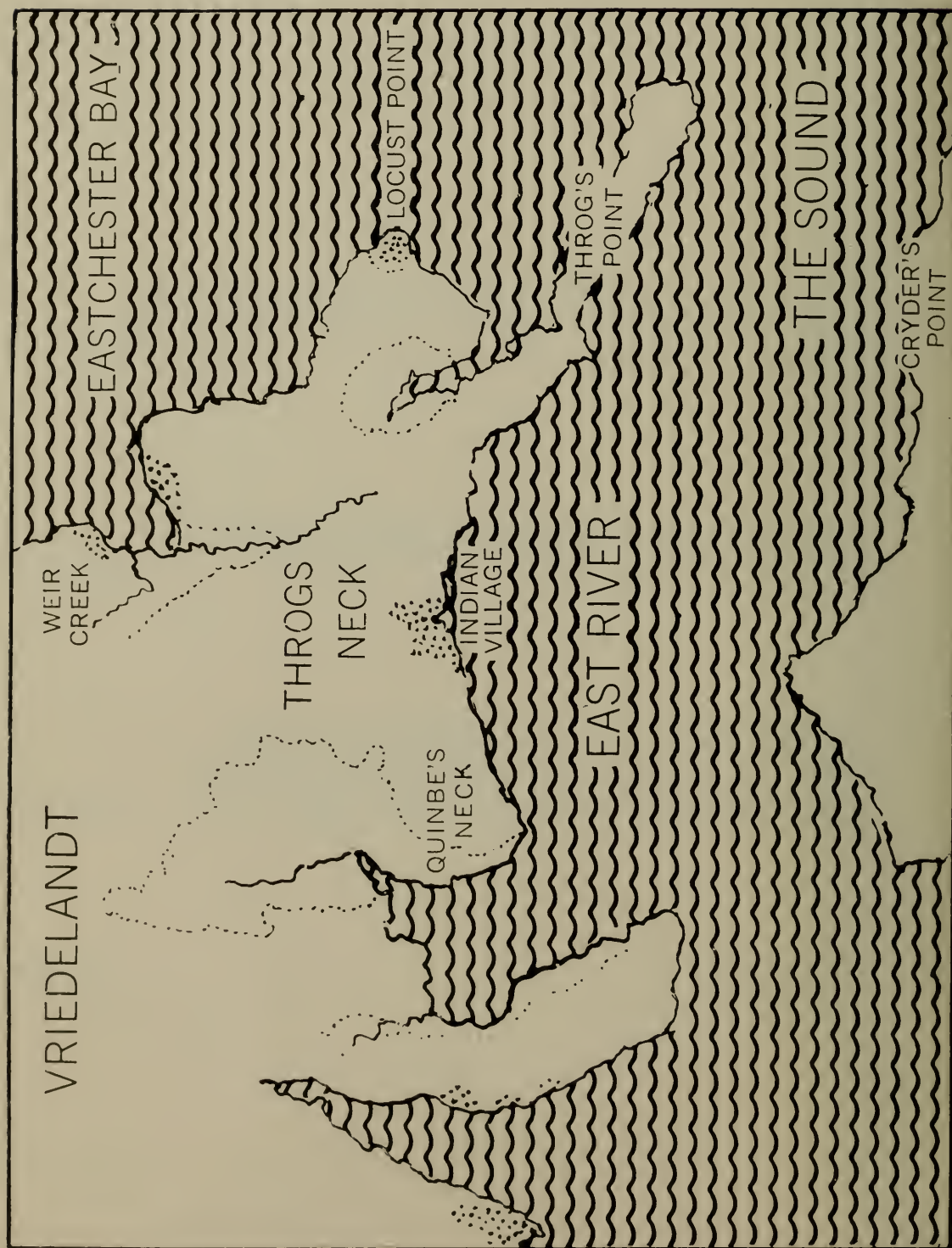


Fig. 1. Site of Indian Village at Throg's Neck, in The Bronx.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE SITE OF THE INDIAN VILLAGE AT THROG'S NECK IN THE BRONX

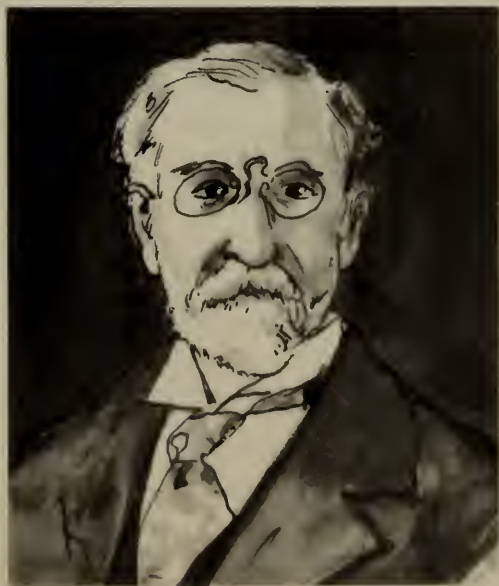
Gary D. Hermalyn, *Executive Director*
The Bronx County Historical Society

THE BRONX is a rich and varied metropolis. Known as the Borough of Universities and Parks with some of the finest cultural institutions in the world, it is home to approximately one and one-half million people.

Located on the mainland, this rich and fertile region has a long history. Well traversed with ancient paths and roads, The Bronx reflects the deep heritage of many people. The waterfront, particularly in the Throg's Neck area, was a popular resort during the 19th Century with large estates and bountiful gardens of which the Huntington home and lands were a prime example.

The article entitled "An Indian Settlement at Throg's Neck" is an excellent sojourn into a part of that heritage. Occurring at a definite point of history, the conclusion of a great estate and the beginning of a new community of small homes, this was the perfect time for the discovery of an even earlier settlement of a Siwanoy Indian village. The Siwanoy was a local division of the Wappingers who occupied most of the coastal area from The Bronx into Fairfield County, Connecticut.

The author of this timely article was a most unusual gentleman. Reginald Pelham Bolton was described in *The New York Times* obituary of February 19, 1942 as an engineer and author. Referred to as 'The #1 Citizen of Washington Heights,' he worked as a consulting engineer for R.H. Macy & Company, the Department of Water Supply and in the construction of



Reginald Pelham Bolton

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the New York Central Terminal. He was also the President and Chairman of the Electric Meter Company.

Born in England in 1856, Bolton came to this country at twenty-three years of age. He studied and wrote on American history and actively sought to preserve the history of New York City. As a member of the original Bronx Society of Arts and Letters, he was involved in the preservation and opening of the Edgar Allan Poe Cottage as a Museum. Recently this landmark Cottage on East Kingsbridge Road and the Grand Concourse was restored once again and re-opened by The Bronx County Historical Society. Thus, Poe Cottage remains an international literary shrine.

During his lifetime, Reginald P. Bolton authored over 15 books and monographs dealing with engineering and history, particularly Indian history. Among the best known books he wrote is *Indian Life of Long Ago in the City of New York*, which was published in 1934 while the exploration of the extensive Throg's Neck site along Schurz Avenue was still in progress, and *Indian Paths in the Great Metropolis*, published by the Museum of the American Indian-Heys Foundation in 1922.

The area examined by Bolton and Calver was originally part of a large tract of land owned by Philip Livingston, Edward Stephenson, and, after 1800, by Mr. A. Hammond, a wealthy merchant, and subsequently by the Mitchell, Post, Ash, Van Schaik and Have-meyer families, and lastly by the family of Collis P. Huntington. The name Throg's Neck stems from its first settler, John Throgmorton, who was given permission to settle there by the New Netherland Government in July, 1643. The land was part of a larger tract called by the Dutch, "Vriedelandt," or "Land of Peace." The colony of 35 families were seeking religious freedom.

Collis Potter Huntington, whose estate Bolton and Calver were excavating, was one of the most important railroad tycoons. Among his interests were the Central Pacific, the Southern Pacific and the Chesapeake and Ohio railway systems. Huntington was born in Harwington, Connecticut, on October 22, 1821. His family was so poor that the town Selectmen sent two sons away to be apprenticed. In 1849, he left a general dry goods business in Oneonta, New York, and, with \$1,200 capital, set out for the California gold fields. Truly Huntington was a textbook example of the American dream of "rags to riches." His waterfront estate, called "The Homestead," on Throg's Neck was a magnificent showplace. Huntington even had his own private bowling alley.

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Collis P. Huntington Mansion, now Preston High School, 1976. (From the Bronx County Historical Society Photographic Collection.)

As Bolton indicates on his map, at the time of the excavation the Huntington mansion was an orphanage, and it was also, and still is, the convent of the Sisters of the Divine Compassion. In 1947, the Order opened Preston High School for girls. Though the high school has added two wings on the west side in 1961 and 1964, the mansion still retains its elegance. During this later construction, members of The Bronx County Historical Society uncovered additional artifacts of arrowheads and coins.

Today, the Huntington name lives on in The Bronx in Collis Place, Huntington Avenue, Huntington Free Library and in a beautiful mausoleum overlooking The Bronx River in Woodlawn Cemetery. Milton Place is named for Collis Huntington's adopted son, Archer Milton, who was born in 1870 and educated in Spain. Archer was the author of many books on Spanish History and the founder of The Hispanic Society of America. He also seems to be the instigator in naming many avenues in Throg's Neck after Spanish-American War heroes. It was Archer Milton Huntington who gave George Heye the land to erect the Museum of the American Indian in Audubon Terrace, as well as six acres for the Research Branch in The Bronx.

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New streets have been added since the excavation. Milton Place is presently located between Harding Avenue and Bolton's Herdy Avenue which is assumed to be Lawton Avenue. Harding Avenue was once a part of the original Throg's Neck Road or, after 1830, Fort Road because it led to Fort Schuyler. The Bolton map shows Hollywood Avenue leading to Fort Schuyler. This is confusing as Hollywood Avenue leads to Sunset Trail to Magnolia Street and then to Poplar Avenue before arriving at the Fort entrance. Today the best route is to go south on Pennyfield Avenue. In 1937, the tip of the Throg's Neck Peninsula and Fort Schuyler was leased to the State for the New York State Maritime Academy.

Hollywood Avenue was mapped as Grave Avenue until 1913. The section of Hollywood between Harding and Lawton was a consistent dividing line between estates from the Colonial days to the early 1900's, as was Balcom Avenue from Lawton Avenue to the East River.



Schurz & Calhoun Avenues, 1976. Area of R.P. Bolton's *Old Lane*. (From the Bronx County Historical Society Photographic Collection.)

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Between Swinton Avenue and Calhoun Avenue, named for Vice President John C. Calhoun, is the area considered to be the site of John Throgmorton's settlement. This section was cut through in 1937 for Quincy Avenue, which appears to be named for Josiah Quincy, patriot and orator, who was associated with Paul Revere. Quincy Avenue's southern boundary is Harding Avenue.

Collis Place, which parallels Schurz Avenue, is between Swinton and Calhoun Avenues today.

Revere Avenue (named after Paul Revere), East Tremont Avenue (extended to the East River in 1920), Silver Beach Place and Schurz Avenue (an obvious ancient riverside pathway named for a Civil War General) outline the assumed landing area of General Howe's British and Hessian troops on October 12, 1776. In one of several attempts by the British Commander, Sir William Howe, to trap General Washington and the American Army, he planned to out-flank the Americans. However, swamps and armed resistance forced a retreat to the ships and an eventual landing at Pell's Point. The Battle of Pell's Point was a major one that saw Colonel John Glover and his 750 men from Marblehead, Massachusetts, slow the

Iron Grape Shot, circa 18th Century, 20/9074, ¾" diameter. Collected by William F. Stiles, Museum of the American Indian.



advance of the British and allow General Washington and his troops to escape to White Plains. Today, Pell's Point is known as Rodman's Neck and is the home of the New York City Police Department's firing range in Pelham Bay Park.

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Cedar of Lebanon, 1932. Schurz and Tremont Avenues, Throgs Neck, The Bronx, New York. (MAI—HF Archives)

The Cedar of Lebanon shown on Bolton's map on East Tremont Avenue between Silver Beach Place and Shurz Avenue was felled by a hurricane in 1944. Planted by Philip Livingston in the 18th Century, this tree was described in 1915 as the finest Cedar of Lebanon in the country with a girth of 13 feet and a height of 40 feet.

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However, the large copper beech tree noted on the Bolton map next to the Huntington Mansion still stands majestically today.

Where Bolton indicated a shrine on the corner of Hollywood and Harding is the old St. Francis De Chantal Church (now used as the school gym). A new church has been recently erected on the block along Hollywood Avenue between Silver Beach Place and Harding Avenue.



Old St. Francis DeChantal Church at S.E. corner of Hollywood and Harding Avenues, 1976.

(From the Bronx County Historical Society Photographic Collection.)



The Bronx Shore Community Association Clubhouse on corner of Revere and Schurz Avenues, 1976.

(From The Bronx County Historical Society Photographic Collection.)

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The boulder fence described along Hollywood Avenue existed until comparatively recently. There are many fine houses along the waterfront south of Schurz Avenue. But perhaps the most beautiful development is the Marina del Rey, a modern deluxe catering establishment at the foot of East Tremont Avenue.

The Bronx Shore Community Association still exists and, besides its beach, has a small meeting house at the corner of Revere and Schurz Avenues.

An interesting development since the investigative work by Bolton and Calver is that the latest inhabitants dwelling on the site are a close-knit community, not unlike the intimate Siwanoy Indian Village of long ago. Bounded by great highways, this region is a quiet neighborhood of one- and two-family houses, many built after 1960. A few older houses were moved to the neighborhood because of the construction of the Throg's Neck Expressway. Situated between the Whitestone and Throg's Neck Bridges, the area provides one of the most unusual and desirable views of New York City.

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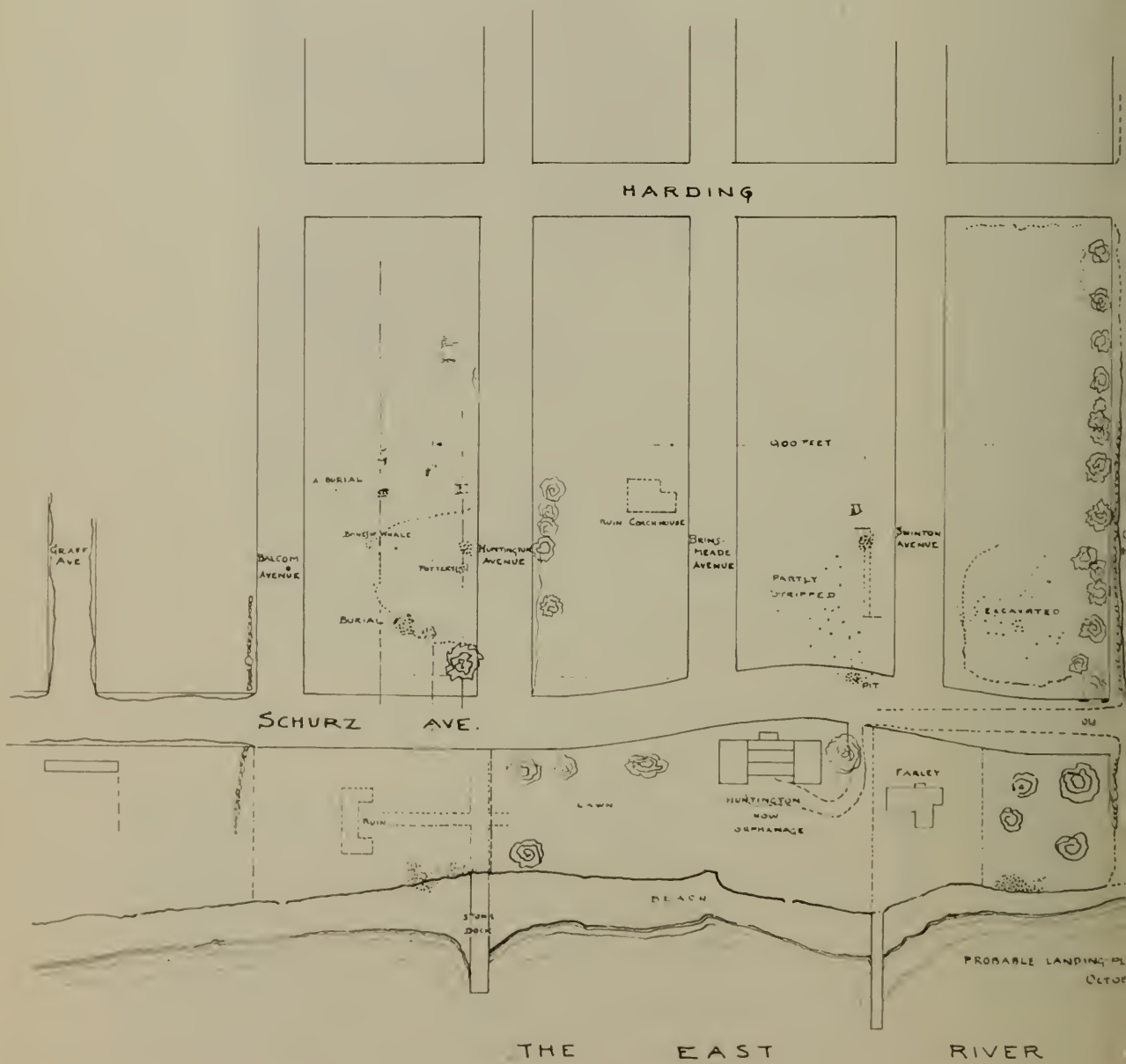
AN INDIAN SETTLEMENT AT THROG'S NECK

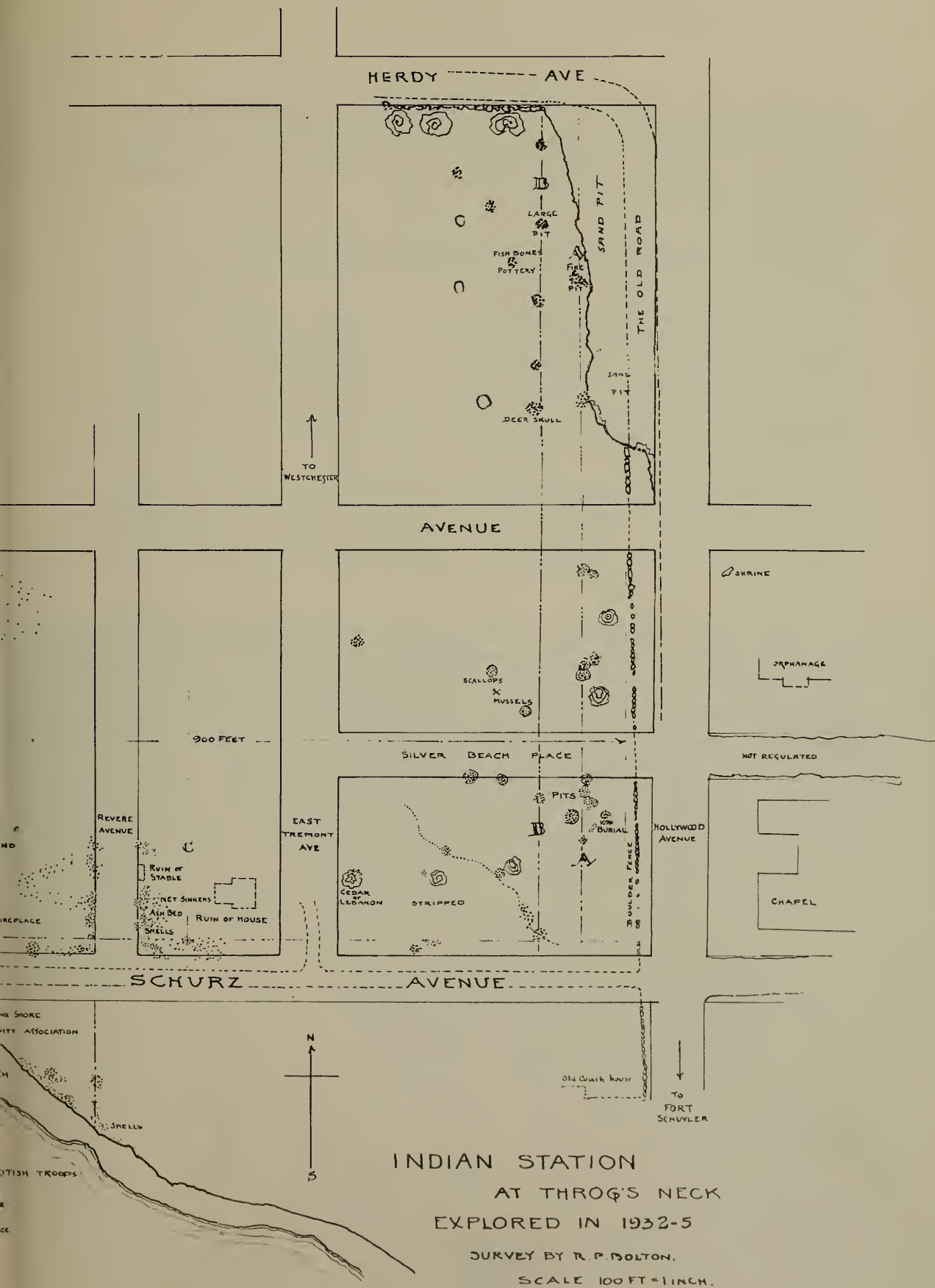
by Reginald Pelham Bolton



Bolton (at right) and Westervelt clearing an area at the Throgs Neck Site, Hollywood Avenue and Silver Beach Place, 1933. (Photograph by William Calver)

IT WAS LEFT FOR US TO DISCOVER, within the area of the City of New York, in the year 1932, another ancient site of native residence, which had escaped observation and exploration until that late date, by reason of its situation largely within the area of the estate of the late Collis P. Huntington. The opening of that property, and the disturbance of the surface by the construction of streets, brought to light many evidences of Indian existence, left or buried by the natives amid vast quantities of the shells of oysters, mussels and clams.





INDIAN STATION AT THROG'S NECK EXPLORED IN 1932-5

SURVEY BY R. P. BOLTON.
SCALE 100 FT = 1 INCH.



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The native site is situated on the north shore of the East River between Baxter Creek and the point which still bears the corrupted name of John Throckmorton, refugee from religious persecution in New England in the year 1642.

The shoreline, with an excellent beach and a desirable anchorage, seems to have been the landing place of the British Army under General William Howe in October 1776, when he attempted to encircle the American forces, then retreated from Manhattan Island toward White Plains. A decision as to the probable site of Throckmorton's home was in point of fact the objective of our first visit, but promptly took second place upon observation of the traces of Indian existence.

The station, as evidenced by the numerous pits of shells which were gradually opened, takes the form indicated by our survey, and covers a space about 2,000 feet in length by about 1,000 feet in width.

The first feature which helps to determine aboriginal existence is the presence of a supply of fresh water. No stream or spring is visible, but there is wet ground on the east side of Calhoun Avenue, which is approximately the center of the settlement. That avenue occupies the position of an old lane or driveway, lined with trees on either side, which appears to have afforded direct access to the Huntington residence, which is still standing about 400 feet to the west facing Schurz Avenue, which now parallels the waterfront.

The building has been increased by two large wings and is now utilized as an orphanage maintained by the Sisters of Poor Clare whose convent is on Hollywood Avenue.

The special feature of the Indian settlement seems to have been a very large fire pit which was situated directly north and in line with the little bay or cove in the shore, which cove has the appearance of having been formed by some water course finding an outlet therein. It is now included within the space occupied by the Bronx Shore Community Association as a bathing place.

Central Firepit at Schurz and Calhoun Avenues. Note where handle of shovel is visible. (Photograph by William Calver) ➤

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The fireplace referred to is also in front or south of the wet ground which is indicative of some now-buried water course, close alongside the old lane which is now Calhoun Avenue.

The fireplace was found to be from 15 to 20 feet in diameter. It had burned in places not always near the center. It had abundant ashes, and in the ashes many broken earthenware jars had fallen to fragments.

It was about one and a half feet deep, the subsoil being a hard clay, on which was found a large flaked blade. Several flaked points (perhaps knifeblades) were found mixed with the ashes in various parts of the fireplace.

It would seem from these observations that the fire pit occupied the center of the village, that it was kept burning by the addition of fuel on its surface, that it was in constant use, and that occasionally it was used to heat the kettles of the residents.

We gather from these circumstances that it may have been a community fire such as was found at the Snakapins village site by



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the late Alanson Skinner, who regarded it as a community fire utilized at times by all the villagers for renewal of fire in their homes or for cooking purposes on the occasion of a feast or ceremony.

A significant discovery in the fireplace was the presence of a number of hand-forged nails, the points of which were clinched over, indicating use of the fire after the arrival of white immigrants, and the use as fuel of lumber which had been nailed together by white men. In these humble objects we have an indication that the natives were in possession of the place at some date after the arrival of the white intruders. Possibly the nails were some of those which secured the woodwork of the house or barns of John Throckmorton which were burned by a raiding party of Indians in August 1642. We know from the record of that terrible occurrence that the home, then but recently completed, was destroyed and the barns into which the helpless cattle had been driven were fired.

There is no direct historical reference to this Indian settlement, large and important though it seems to have been. But we gain a dim picture of the people who inhabited it in the account of Captain Thomas Dermer of his venturesome voyage through Hellgate and the East River into the Sound in the year 1610. He records that upon approaching a strait between conspicuous points, which from his description appear to have been the narrow space between Throg's Neck and Cryder Point on Log Island, his vessel was steered so close to the land that the natives, gathered in great number, "let fly" at them from the shore, having by the position of the ship "great advantage" of the vessel.

The captain regarded the conflict as a set battle in which, he piously records, "it pleased God to make us victors." Since an able-bodied native could make accurate shooting only for about a hundred yards, we may assume that the engagement was rather one-sided in favor of the crew armed with explosives and firearms.

Our interest in the affair lies in the evidence of hostility on the part of the red man at that early date, and in the presence of a "multitude" of Indians in that locality.

In view of the extent of the site at Schurz Avenue, it may be assumed that the population comprised a considerable number of people.

The site, as developed and measured, appears to have been laid out with considerable care and on some systematic method. It extends along the shoreline for a distance of about 2,000 feet, the center of which space is the large fire pit already described, which is

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about 20 feet north of the north side of Schurz Avenue.

This line, if projected about 1,000 feet in either direction, i.e., east and west, cuts boundaries marked by old stone fences at either end and extends into a group of fire pits, waste pits and native burials.

The east side of the site, having been stripped by the steam shovel in order to secure the surface soil for use in other localities, afforded the most visible evidences. The pits on this side are found to have extended at right angles to the base line described, about 900 feet in a northerly direction.

It is evident from the rather regular relation of the pits to one another that some systematic arrangement of dwellings was followed.

Our discovery of the pits was made on no such assumption, for we merely followed the guidance of the steel "sounding" rod and might have saved ourselves both time and labor had we possessed any idea that the pits followed a systematic disposition. The position of each pit was measured from the lines of the streets now laid out and curbed, and it was only in placing them upon the plan that the arrangement of the settlement became evident.

The fire pits, situated as they were within the huts or bark houses, fall in line as shown upon the survey by the line A.A. These fire pits have been separated from shell or rubbish pits by a space of about 50 to 60 feet. Beyond these shell pits are other shallow pits containing little besides the shells of mussels or clams.



Shell columella, 18/2742, 3" long.

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Apparent Arrangement of Indian Homes. From a drawing by Bolton.

We may conclude, from the number of these pits so disposed, that the houses were erected in a line and that each was provided by its occupants with a pit in front, probably for the purpose of storing food.

Beyond the food pits, a garbage pit was located in almost every instance.

The same arrangements seem to have been adopted on the extreme west of the station, on lines marked G.G., F.F., and E.E.

It seems probable also that other lines of dwellings may have been situated between the two lines of huts on the east and west ends of the village, though the disturbance of the surface by modern buildings, and by the stripping of the soil, have prevented any precise observations. If such existed they were situated on the lines of Revere Avenue and Swinton Avenue.

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Human burials were found at both ends of the site. That on the east was laid out flat, in European fashion. Its position was a little south of several fire pits, which were so close as to run into one another.

We may gather from these observations that the homes of the residents on this site were far from haphazard structures, that they were systematically placed, and that each home was conducted on very similar methods.

The arrangement seems to have been that each bark hut, whether round or rectangular in shape, had within it a fire hearth. This hearth was surrounded by stones, and over it the kettle hung suspended by a cord of skin or gut, secured to a crossbar set in two forked sticks on either side of the fireplace.

Outside the hut, perhaps facing the door opening, there was a large pit in which the store of corn, beans, or other food was kept. The larder would be emptied from time to time, and when in that condition, it was a tempting receptacle for the ever-growing accumulation of shells in and around the dwelling.

Into this pit, then, went the ashes of the house fire, the shells of oysters, and such waste objects as the fragments of broken kettles, the latter being evidence of a not infrequent household disaster when the cord gave way or was burnt and the kettle went down into the fire, breaking into innumerable and irreparable fragments.

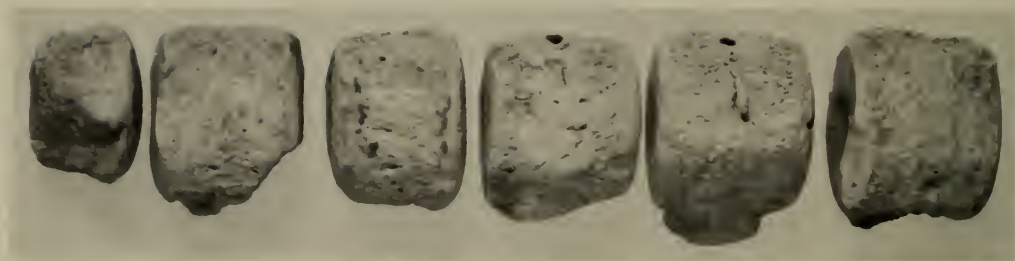
Some distance beyond the food pit another, lesser pit was dug, perhaps for the reception of offensive materials. They contained sometimes no more than mussels or clams, rejected, perhaps, as food and dumped wholesale into the garbage pit.

These details account reasonably for the presence of the pits and the occasion of their use.

The shells of oysters increased in size in the lower part of the pits, some specimens near the bottom being upwards of seven inches in length. From these ancient objects it became evident that the food pits had been utilized over a long period of time extending into a past in which the shellfish were of great size.

It may be concluded also that the natives subsisted largely upon a shellfish diet. We found only a few fragments of bone, which objects have been found frequently in inland stations. However, in one pit at Huntington Avenue, we came upon a rather curious collection of fish bones, which upon expert examination proved to be the tail vertebrae of a small sperm whale. In early colonial times,

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Vertebra bone of tail of small whale, 18/2733, 10" long.

whales were abundant along the coast of Long Island, but it is not easy to decide how a whale could have been taken in the vicinity of this Indian settlement, unless the mammal were young and therefore small enough to enter the East River. The tail of a whale is sometimes roasted in a form of ceremonial sacrifice, and these bones may be evidence of such a ceremony.

There is historical record in Colonial documents of frequent "drift" whales cast ashore in dead or dying condition, at Huntington, at Oyster Bay, and near Maspeth. The presence of the little whale's tail at Throg's Neck is probably a result of the acquaintance of natives of The Bronx with their relatives, the Matinococ, on Long Island.

The burial which we found at the other end of the station, on the west side of Huntington Avenue, was that of a child. It was about halfway down in a large shell pit, and had been laid out flat, the head being protected by several large stones. The lower limbs were decayed away, but the skull contained the teeth, which determined that the child had been about 12 or 13 years of age.

Site where potsherd 18/2731 was found. Schurz and Huntington Avenues, Throg's Neck. Note Huntington Mansion in background. (MAI—HF Archives)

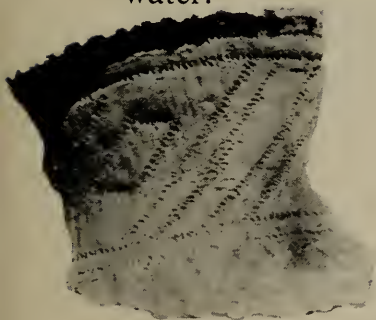


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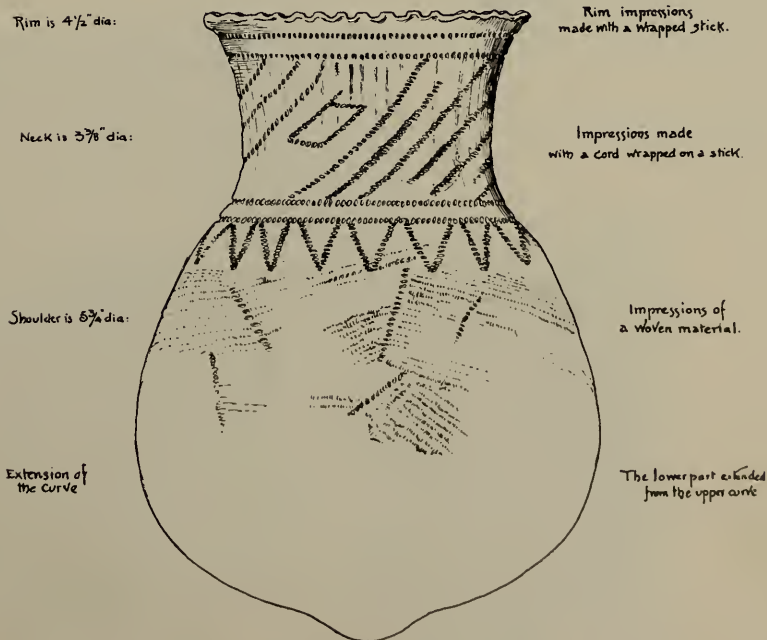
Above the interment, among the mass of shells covering it, there was a large part of a very unusual and artistic vessel of Indian pottery, which may have been cast there by a disconsolate parent.

The vessel, as indicated very clearly by the large piece of the neck, was of a most interesting and unusual form. Its decoration of diagonal lines, which had been made with a wrapped stick, is very similar to that employed on many of the sherds found in the great ash pit. The design seems to have been an attempt to imitate the familiar "Iroquoian" pattern, but the decoration was incomplete, as if executed from memory.

The neck is flared, the rim thickened, and the edge is embossed with the wrapped stick. From the shape of the long neck of this vessel it may be assumed that it was utilized for the conveyance of water.



Potsherd 18/2731, 1½" x 2".



Indian pottery Vessel, drawn from portions found
in burial pit on Village site at Throg's Neck.

Bolton's drawing of 18/2731. 1932.

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Another very uncommon and graceful vessel was found on the site, the neck of which is very pronounced. It was decorated in an unusual manner, with straight vertical columns instead of the usual diagonal grooves. Every third column is cut into small, rectangular facets. It is fortunate that the fragment discovered was a large part of the neck and rim, from which the shape of the upper part of the vessel can be accurately determined.



Around the edge of the rim are similar facets. This form of decoration is unique. It had been executed with skill and care, and its shape was evidently planned for the conveyance of liquids. It is not a cooking kettle. It evidences a considerable degree of ability in design and skill in production.

Potsherd 18/2731, 1½" X 2".



Detail of Bolton's drawing of potsherd 18/2731, calling attention to the "Unique decoration." 1932.

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Among the pits on the north side of Silver Beach Place, an extensive pit was located in which large oyster shells were near the surface. In this pit there were two triangular arrow points and a considerable number of pottery sherds, some split meat-bones, and a few fish bones, two of which were so perfect and so sharp that they may have served the purpose of needles.

Another pit to the west of this one was opened which proved rich in fragments of pottery of a crude form, decorated with marks made by the edge of a scallop shell or clam. The pit contained a vast quantity of oyster shells, of sizes mingled together as if they had been shoveled haphazardly into the pit.

A shallow pit just west of the above (in which a blind toad was disturbed near the surface) was evidently a fire pit, for it had fragments of wood partly burned, and much broken pottery.

The pit extended nearly seven feet in diameter, and in it there were some fragments of deer bones and of the jaw of a small animal, probably a mink. The shells in the ashes were greatly mixed, and their quantity, compared with the small and scarce fragments of bone, gave an idea of the predominance of shellfish as a food.

Another pit was found close by, from which was extracted a part of the rim of a vessel of sub-Iroquoian design, but decorated very crudely, giving the impression that the potter formed the vessel by some recollection of the shape of an Iroquoian pot and its diagonal lines of decoration.

A grooved stone net-sinker was the only object of stone in this large shell pit, affording another evidence of the means of subsistence of the inhabitants of the village.



Stone net sinkers, 18/2734, 2½" X 3¼".

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Seven specimens, chipped implement blank, largest is $2\frac{1}{4}'' \times 3\frac{1}{4}''$.

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A little south of the pit, several flat stones were found below the surface; under them were blackened soil and the shells of oysters and clams, some of which had evidently been roasted. We surmised that something might have been buried below the stones, and digging a little deeper, we found a couple of little bones, part of a femur and of a shoulder blade, presumably of a child. This interment was therefore made under a fire pit, probably within the hut and perhaps in winter.

These discoveries, being measured and set out on the map, show that the site of this village extended east and west along the shore front about 2,000 feet, and that the distance from the central fire pit to the groups of shell-filled pits was equal in either direction.

The location of the large fire pit in the middle of the settlement indicates that it was used as a community fire pit.

The conclusions which may be derived from the disposition of the remains of aboriginal existence are that the settlement was laid out along a baseline approximating the present Schurz Avenue, which covers a probable Indian pathway parallel to the shore.

At right angles to this old footway several lines of huts or bark houses were extended. On the east side, the line of occupied dwellings evidently caused the divergence of the footway, which preceded the old Fort Schuyler Road (where it turned east from East Tremont Avenue on what is now Herdy Avenue), turning south again at right angles to the old road, which is marked by part of its boulder fence, and ran parallel and partly under the present Hollywood Avenue.

This marked divergence of an evidently ancient means of access to the important promontory of Throg's Point seems to indicate that it was made necessary by the existence of some obstruction to a straight course, which in this case was undoubtedly the Indian village herein described.

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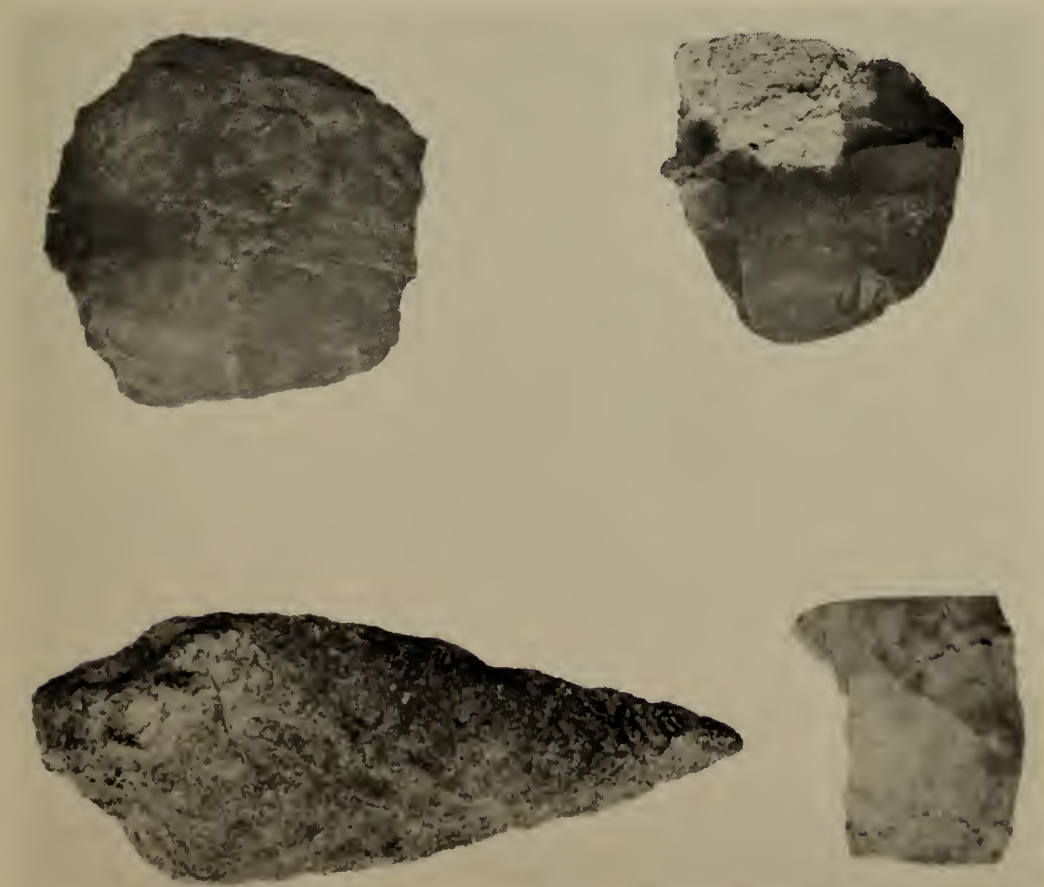
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Compiled by Ruth N. Wilcox, Librarian

INDIAN NOTES

ADDENDUM

William F. Stiles, Chief Curator of the Museum of the American Indian, also excavated the Indian site at Throg's Neck between 1932 and 1937. Many of the items indicated on Bolton's map were uncovered by Mr. Stiles. In addition, Mr. Stiles uncovered several pits and burials not mentioned in the Bolton article. Most of the artifacts found by Mr. Stiles are in the collection of the Museum of the American Indian. It is hoped that the information provided in this volume and the artifacts found at the Indian site at Throg's Neck will be the subject of future research.



Arrow, knife and scraper points, 18/8127, 2½" long. Collected by William F. Stiles.

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